

SAND, CONSIDERED AS AN ACCESSORY HABITAT FOR THE NERITES

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The main environment for Nerites consists of rocks, where they bore individual holes, and of stones. But they sometimes occur on or in the sand, either near rock or even far away from any rocky or stony formation. In the latter alternative, an adaptation to the sandy life is to be considered.

At Heron Island, Queensland, I have noticed that *Nerita albicilla* L. is capable of moving on the sand surface for a distance of two or three feet away from a rocky place. The trails on the sand may lead to individuals buried at little depth.

Nerita polita L. acts in the same manner. This species, particularly active and resistant, may be found on the sand, not only near its ordinary habitat, the rock, but much further away. On the sand flat, which lies on the north-eastern side of Heron Island, this species may be seen up to a distance of 300 metres from any rock. The trails it makes, at low tide, on the surface of the sand are often rectilinear, parallel as well as perpendicular to the shore line. These trails may spring from a hole in the sand, showing that the *Nerita* had buried itself at high tide, and had emerged and circulated at low tide.

Thus being essentially rocky creatures, the Nerites may venture on the sand, often very far away, and they seem to be preadapted to a burrowing life.

A little problem then occurs, that of their feeding. In ordinary conditions, the Nerites feed upon small algae growing on the surface of the rocks. But these algae are absent in the highest level of the sandy places where Nerites are occasionally located.

When Nerites venture too far away on the sand to be able to get back to their rocks, I suppose they feed on the sandy area, not at the same level where they are usually distributed, but at a lower level, on the greenish lower sand which is rich in algae.

On several occasions I saw, at low tide, *Nerita polita* reaching from the hole where they were buried in the upper white sand at high tide, to the greenish lower sand.

Although not having observed the feeding process itself, I think this may be a satisfactory explanation of the fact that Nerites may survive when they settle occasionally in this new environment—the sand.

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